



# Live Interpretation

**Live interpretation can be one of the most exciting ways to bring a site to life and for our purposes includes performance and costumed interpretation. The history of a site can be brought to life through re-creating traditional crafts or running horse and carriage trips for instance.**

## Strengths

- Provides an exciting fun and memorable experience.
- Can bring out a true sense of place by introducing folk law and legend.
- Can be multi - sensory and accessible to all.

## Weaknesses

- Site needs to be capable of accommodating performers and audience.
- Input from professionals; individuals or companies.
- Admission charges may deter some visitors.

## Audience

- Day and staying visitors.
- Children and teenagers.
- Education visitors if appropriately themed.

## Costings

- This can be expensive as costs can include administration, marketing, staff costs and costume.

## Planning

- Decide on your target audience and the purpose of the interpretation. [Click here](#) to find out more.
- Will the audience be in role or not?
- What story are you going to tell through live interpretation?
- Are you focusing on an event or the life of a character?
- Is this an activity you will do regularly?
- Will you use first or third person? First person can be more difficult as the person must stay in role throughout, but can be really effective if done well. In third person the person will be in costume but not playing a role.
- What is your budget? You may need money to spend on resources, costumes, marketing, training costs and perhaps a live interpretation company.

# Live Interpretation

## Research

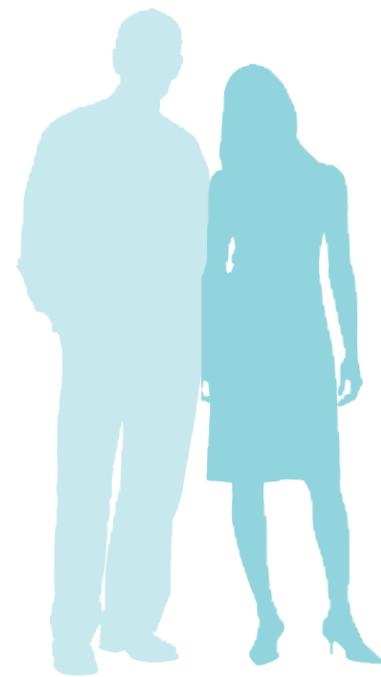
- What stories do you want to tell?
- Establish what you already know.
- Do you have access to any artefacts that you can use in this interpretation?



## Develop content & experience

### You will need to consider the following

- The content needs to be factually relevant to the site.
- Will the person be playing an imaginary character or a real person?
- Will the performance take place in one setting or will the group move around the site?
- Will you provide resources as part on the day?
- Will you do activities?
- Having a quality interpreter/s is vital so that the visitors get a real and accurate sense of place. With this in mind will a volunteer do this is or will you seek professional input?
- Whether you have one costumed character talking to the public on site for the day or you are staging a recreation of an event - for example, a historic boat being pulled by horse - it all needs to be as engaging as possible.
- Depending on the type of interpretation consider how you can involve the audience - can you bring along props/authentic objects that the audience can handle?



# Live Interpretation

## Pre-open

**Organisation** If a professional group is carrying out the work then you can expect them to be fully briefed. If a volunteer is doing the interpretation then they need to be fully briefed either in the role they are playing or in the information you would like them to get across.

**Marketing** If nobody knows about your event then no-one will show up so get the message out there: word of mouth, social media, posters, local press.

## Open

On the day ensure that the performer/s are there in plenty of time so that any set props can be cleared and everyone is ready to welcome the visitors.

- Health and Safety considerations.  
[Click here](#) to view general Risk Assessment.
- Record through taking photos which can then be used in follow up publicity. You could submit some to a local paper for instance. For advice on acquiring photo permission please see the Canal & River Trust photo permission guidelines.  
[Click here](#) to find out more.

## Evaluate and Celebrate

- Live interpretation is as much about people enjoying themselves as well as what they actually learn. Therefore short face to face surveys on the day can be a good way to measure how the visitors felt about the event.
- Publicise the success of the event, in the same way that you initially advertised.
- Record visitor numbers.
- Give opportunity for visitor feedback/comments.
- Is it worth holding the activity again?
- It is difficult to measure learning, but for more information visit our evaluation section [Click here](#).



## The Jane Austen Centre

**If you visit the Jane Austen Centre in Bath you will be transported back to the 19th century and have the opportunity to meet some of Austen's most loved characters such as Elizabeth Bennet and Elinor Dashwood.**

The staff have been wearing Regency costume for several years, and the introduction of Centre 'characters' from Austen novels was implemented in early 2014. The staff play characters from Austen's novels, an idea which came about as it was believed that if visitors could

meet their favourite characters this would add to the excitement of the visit. It was also felt that the involvement of costumed interpretation would add to the authentic Regency atmosphere, and so enhance the experience for visitors.

Visitors really enjoy the atmosphere, with most visitor feedback mentioning the staff, and their costumes. In fact, many visitors request a photo with the staff! Eleanor recommends that all members who are taking part in any costumed interpretation are aware of the purpose behind it, so that they can perform their role as effectively as possible.

<http://www.janeausten.co.uk/the-jane-austen-centre/exhibition/>



**'Our exhibition features an area in which our visitors can try on Regency dressing up and this has always proven to be one of the most popular parts for visitors'.**

Eleanor Roberts  
(General Manager)